

The President's Daily Brief

9 October 1970

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On *Page 1* we speculate on Vietnamese reactions to President Nixon's proposals.

La Paz has returned to a high state of tension [redacted]
[redacted] (Page 2)

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Cambodian Government spokesmen have overstated the number of enemy troops involved in attacks against the relief column on Route 6. (Page 3)

[redacted] 50X1

The cease-fire continues to hold in Jordan. (Page 5)

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VIETNAM

The Communists are reacting to President Nixon's proposals with stiff reiterations of themes heard many times before. This is Hanoi's easiest interim approach and the one Communist negotiators took in Paris yesterday: the US program is propaganda; the Viet Cong's various "points" provide a "correct" basis for a settlement; and a cease-fire should be the last step, not the first. A very hard-line commentary carried by Hanoi's press agency on 8 October contains the most comprehensive statement along these lines.

The Communists could play this tune for some time, but we do not rule out a more positive public response of the kind that followed a few days after the announcement of a partial bombing halt in March 1968. Hanoi acted fast and positively on that occasion because it was ready with an initiative in response to such a US move. It now has to digest a more comprehensive package of substantive proposals than ever before, but Hanoi almost certainly has been anticipating something of this sort for some time. Therefore, a fairly rapid Communist response aimed at recapturing the initiative may be in order, perhaps a follow-up to the Viet Cong's eight points, which in themselves are pretty thin gruel. We think the Communists will find the President's message worth exploring, especially because of the tone and intent it conveyed.

South Vietnamese attitudes toward President Nixon's proposals will hinge, as always, on their estimate of Hanoi's reaction. President Thieu and his colleagues undoubtedly take comfort from the knowledge that the allies had already proposed many of the key substantive points in the 7 October proposals and these had already been denounced by the Communists. On the other hand, they are probably concerned that the Communists may be encouraged by the tone of the President's language.

The South Vietnamese leaders probably fear that Hanoi may eventually be tempted to explore the allied proposals more seriously. Because any serious negotiations would imply that the present government would be in jeopardy, Thieu would expect South Vietnamese acceptance of his authority to decline. Thieu does not separate his twin objectives of keeping his own regime in power and of keeping South Vietnam non-Communist, and he is counting heavily on the successful implementation of the Vietnamization program to achieve them. Both would be endangered, in his view, if the political underpinnings of the South Vietnamese Vietnamization effort were to be severely shaken.

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BOLIVIA

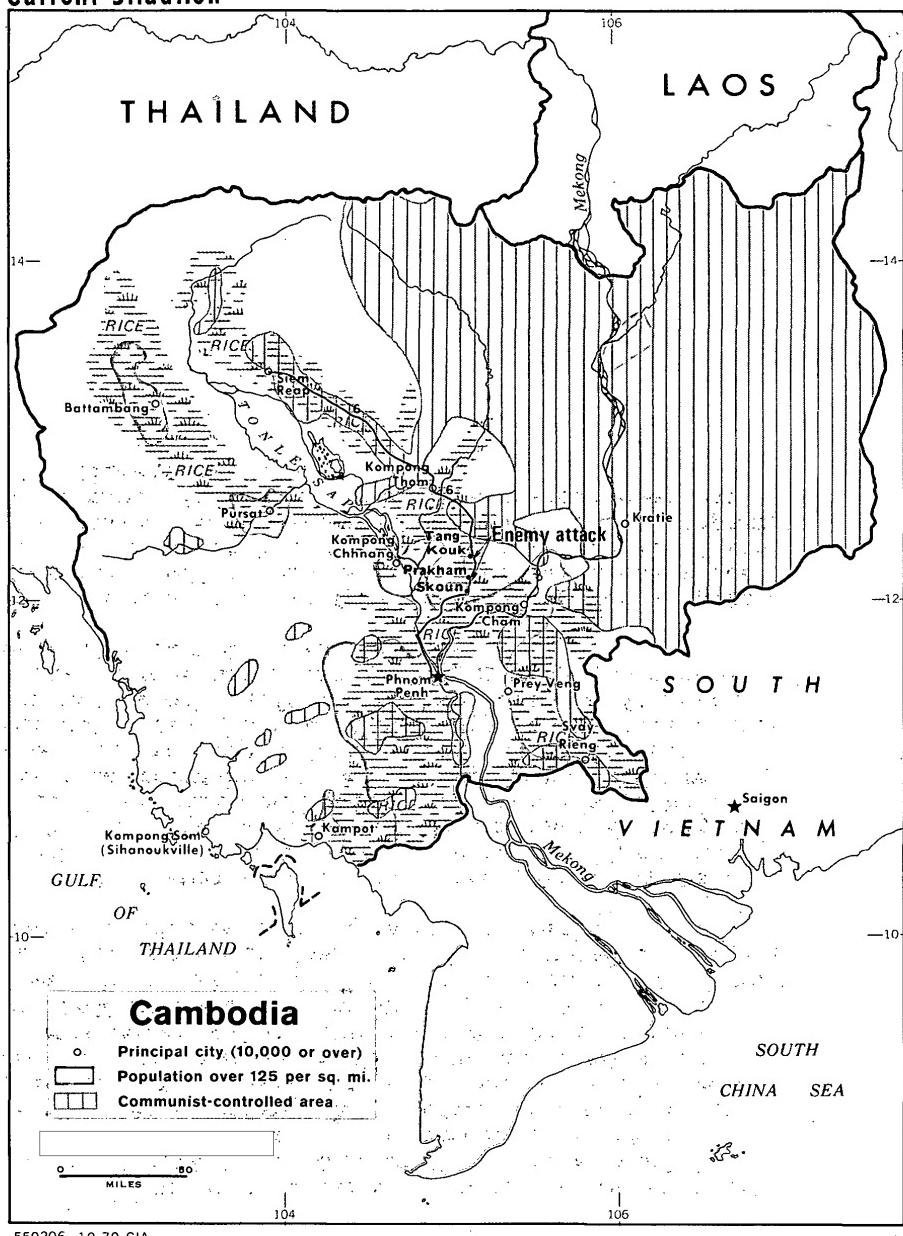
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[redacted] signs late yesterday that authority was breaking down in La Paz. Students broke into the offices of the criminal investigation department and confiscated records. There are some reports of looting and armed students and workers were stopping traffic in the university area last night. The campesinos occupied the agricultural ministry and threatened to block all roads unless they were given the right to name a campesino agricultural minister.

Torres spent most of yesterday discussing the formation of his cabinet with leftist labor, student, and political groups. So far only 10 of the 18 cabinet posts have been announced and it appears that there is considerable disagreement over the division of the spoils.

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Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Government spokesmen in Phnom Penh greatly exaggerated the size of two ground attacks on 8 October against the Cambodian Army column on Route 6. Two sharp ground probes did occur in the Tang Kouk area, but neither side suffered many losses.

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The government's allegation that "7,000 to 10,000" enemy troops were involved was particularly off base. [redacted]

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[redacted] there probably are no more than 3,000 Communist troops within striking distance of government forces between Skoun and Tang Kouk.

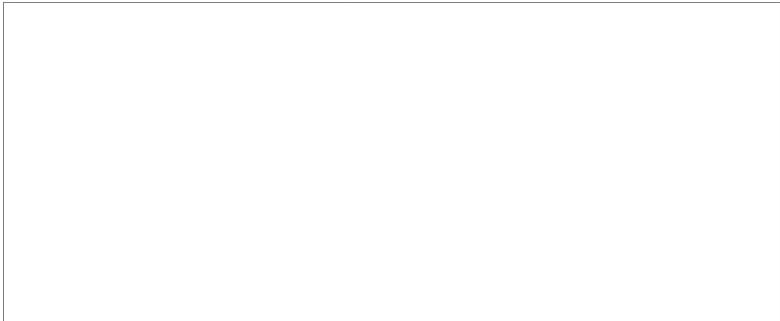
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The Cambodians give no indication of revising the plans for the overland relief operation to Kompong Thom. Three battalions recently returned to Phnom Penh from Tang Kouk, but these may be on temporary security duty in the capital in connection with festivities for today's proclamation of the republic.

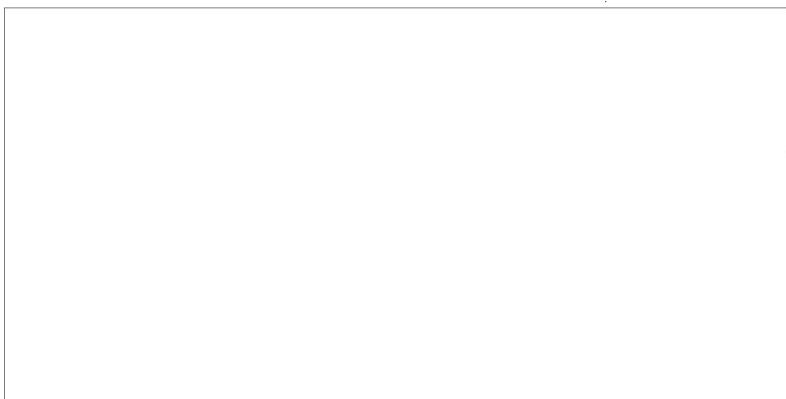
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SOUTH VIETNAM



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NOTE

Jordan: The cease-fire continues to hold. There are no new reports of fighting, and both sides are continuing to release prisoners. Press reports indicate that the Arab follow-up committee is meeting in Amman to work out a permanent pact between the government and fedayeen. The committee has been surprisingly effective in implementing the vague truce agreement reached in Cairo. It may be trying now to capitalize on this momentum, and the at least grudging confidence it has obtained from the government and fedayeen, to arrange a more detailed pact dealing with the longer-term relations between the two sides.

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